

# Program Highlights for the Creative Learning Initiative in 2016–2017

## Access, Creative Teaching, and the Community Arts Network

### Creative Learning Initiative Description and Goals

The Creative Learning Initiative (CLI) is a community-wide effort to bring creative learning and the arts to every student in Austin. Lead by MINDPOP, the City of Austin, and the Austin Independent School District (AISD), CLI supports a systemic and sustainable approach that integrates creativity, the arts, and Creative Teaching strategies with classroom teaching, campus programming, and campus improvement. CLI aims to address disparities in access to the arts for young people within schools, across the district, and in neighborhoods throughout our city. This is achieved through dedication to equitable access to creative learning and the arts for every student in Austin.

Critical to the work of CLI is fostering arts richness in AISD schools. The visionary objective of CLI is to ensure all AISD schools are creative campuses by 2023. In 2016–2017, the 5<sup>th</sup> year of CLI implementation in AISD, two-thirds of AISD campuses met the standard of a creative campus. The term Creative Campus is a multifaceted way to summarize a framework of nine components that can come together in multiple ways to measure the concept of the arts richness of a school. These components include sequential fine arts, Creative Teaching across the curriculum, professional development opportunities, arts partnerships, after-school activities, community building through the arts, communication, leadership, and facilities (Figure 1).

Figure 1.  
Nine Components of a Creative Campus



Source. MINDPOP



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## CLI Implementation in AISD

At the campus level, the three pillars of the CLI implementation are to (a) increase students' access to sequential fine arts instruction, (b) foster classroom learning with Creative Teaching across the curriculum, and (c) increase networks of arts programming during and out of the school day. The robust program model operates on a staged implementation schedule that adds one vertical team each year through a competitive process that prioritizes readiness and need.

Campuses in a vertical team initially work for 3 foundational years. During this initial stage of program implementation, foundational campuses receive a robust set of support interventions (e.g., workshops in Creative Teaching, follow-up instructional coaching, instruction in dance and drama in elementary schools, and financial support for arts partnerships). Each foundational year, teachers focus on integrating Creative Teaching strategies into their teaching practices, while principals and teacher-leaders build capacity toward sustainability. After the first 3 years of program implementation, campuses graduate to a sustaining-campus status that assumes more campus independence and less reliance on support services.

## Implementation by the Numbers in 2016–2017

Since 2012, CLI has provided 56 campuses (currently, 32 foundational campuses and 24 sustaining campuses) with the ongoing support to design and implement comprehensive campus plans to become more arts rich. To date, this work has reached more than 31,000 students and more than 2,400 teachers (Table 1). In 2016–2017, the program continued to achieve milestones toward program implementation and produced measurable positive impacts on access to sequential fine arts instruction, on Creative Teaching competency, and with the community arts network. Over the next 5 years of program implementation, CLI aims to reach 63 additional campuses, more than 50,000 students, and approximately 3,700 additional teachers.

**Table 1.**  
**Snapshot of CLI implementation in AISD in 2016–2017**

	Foundational	Sustaining
# of campuses	32	24
# of vertical teams	3	2
# of students	16,187	15,080
# of teachers	1,336	1,159

## CLI Implementation Supports

The CLI implementation model in AISD provides systemic supports at the classroom level, the district level, and the community level.

Examples of the supports provided through the CLI model include:

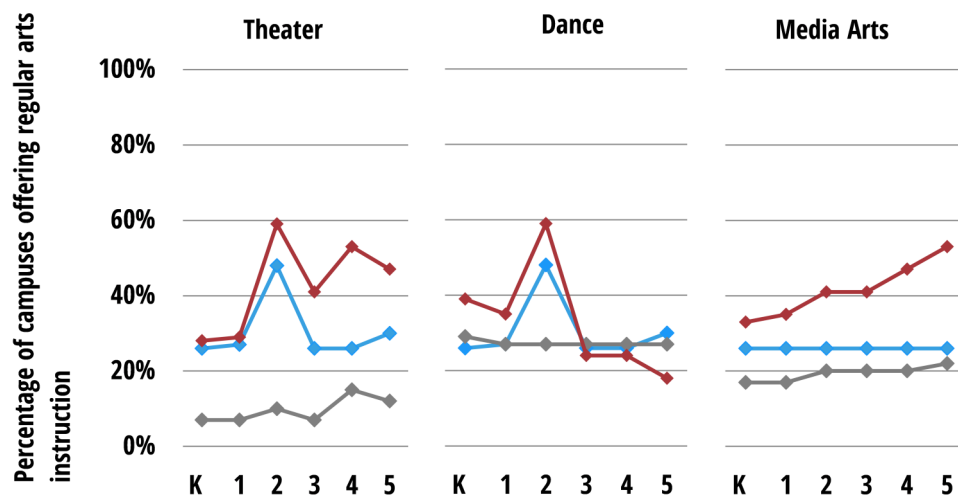
- Asset mapping at the city level
- Professional development opportunities for community arts partners to increase pedagogical skills and align their programs with school needs
- Parental supports
- Policy recommendations at the board level
- Curriculum development support at the district level
- Campus planning support for principals
- Professional development opportunities for teachers, including follow-up coaching
- Dance and theater integrated instruction
- Professional development opportunities for City of Austin Parks and Recreation instructional staff

## Increased Student Access to Sequential Fine Arts in AISD Elementary Schools

In 2016–2017, CLI elementary campuses offered a greater diversity of arts forms than did non-CLI campuses. Second-grade students at CLI campuses received dance and theater instruction or integration from CLI dance and theater specialists. However, opportunities to learn in diverse arts forms at elementary schools went beyond those directly supported by CLI, as displayed by the consistently greater amount of theater and media arts instruction across all elementary grades. Examining CLI sustaining schools, more access was observed in theater and media arts than at CLI foundation schools and non-CLI schools, despite fewer support services in the sustaining phase (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Students at **CLI sustaining schools** had more access to sequential fine arts, when compared with **foundational CLI schools** and **non-CLI schools**.



Source. 2016–2017 elementary school arts inventory

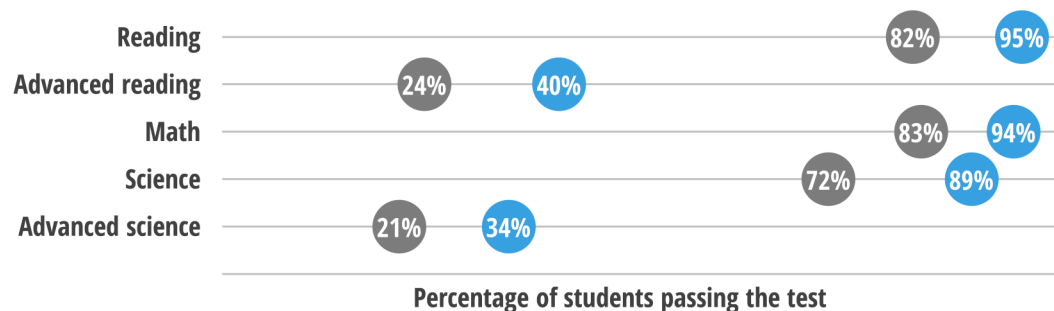
Note. Twenty-three foundational campuses, 18 sustaining campuses, and 41 non-CLI campuses were included for analysis. K means kindergarten. Response options included *not offered during school day*, *at least 45 minutes every 3<sup>rd</sup> day all year long (40 meetings)*, *at least once a week all year long (24+ meetings)*, *at least once a week for one semester (12-23 meetings)*, and *other rotation (6-11 meetings)*.

## Fine Arts Course Participation and Academic Achievement in AISD Middle Schools

The number of middle school fine arts courses completed during tenure at the campus was significantly related to students' academic outcomes on their State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exams. The number of fine arts courses middle school students completed significantly predicted their STAAR passing status in reading, advanced reading, math, science, and advanced science, controlling for students' socioeconomic status (SES) ( $p < .05$ ).

Figure 3.

Middle school students who were **highly engaged in the arts** had better academic outcomes in reading, advanced reading, math, science, and advanced science than did students who were less engaged in the arts.



Source. AISD student class enrollment record 2014–2015, 2015–2016, 2016–2017, AISD student STAAR records 2016–2017

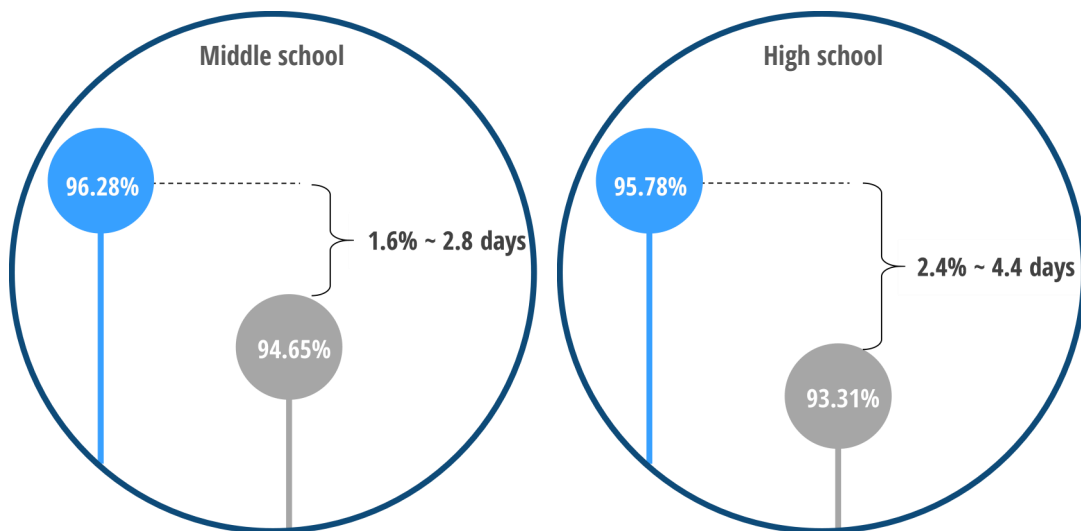
Note. *Highly engaged* included student data from the top quartile of fine arts participation; *less engaged* include student data from the bottom quartile of fine arts participation.

## Fine Arts Course Participation and Attendance in AISD Secondary Schools

The number of fine arts courses that secondary students completed during their tenure at the campus was significantly related to students' attendance rates ( $p < .05$ ), controlling for students' SES. To better understand what that statistical difference looked like in terms of attendance rates, days in school, and revenue based on average daily attendance, we further divided the students into quartiles, based on their fine arts participation, and compared attendance rates of students in the highest and lowest quartiles. The difference in attendance rates amounts to a 1.6 percentage point difference in middle school attendance rates (or 2.8 additional days at school) and a 2.4 percentage point difference in high school attendance rates (or 4.4 additional days at school) (Figure 4).

Figure 4.

Attendance was greater for secondary students who were **more involved** in fine arts courses than for secondary students who were **less involved** in fine arts courses.



*Note.* *More involved* included student data from the top quartile of fine arts participation; *less involved* include student data from the bottom quartile of fine arts participation.

Hypothetically speaking, if attendance rates for all high school students were equivalent to attendance rates for high school students in the highest quartile of arts participation, the change in attendance could equate to an increase in average daily attendance (ADA) revenue of \$1.9 million dollars. Similarly, an additional \$700K could hypothetically be expected from middle school students if attendance rates for all middle school students were equivalent to attendance rates for middle school students in the highest quartile of arts participation.

## Sequential Fine Arts Measurement

In AISD, elementary school sequential fine arts instruction is offered to students in groups according to their grade level. Because these arts opportunities are offered at the grade level, we cannot track individual students' participation. To understand access to sequential fine arts in elementary schools, at the end of each year, we ask elementary school principals about their regular offerings in sequential fine arts in terms of the frequency, duration, and grade level for each art form.

At the middle and high school levels, students have individual agency in setting up their schedule to include various electives. Therefore, we track students by their academic records of courses completed. Middle school students are expected to complete two semesters of fine arts courses. High school students are also expected to complete two semesters of fine arts courses.

To understand access to sequential fine arts in middle and high schools, we counted the number of fine arts courses completed by cohorts of non-mobile students who stayed at the same school for all of middle or high school. Our counts of courses were restricted to the official code for fine arts courses.

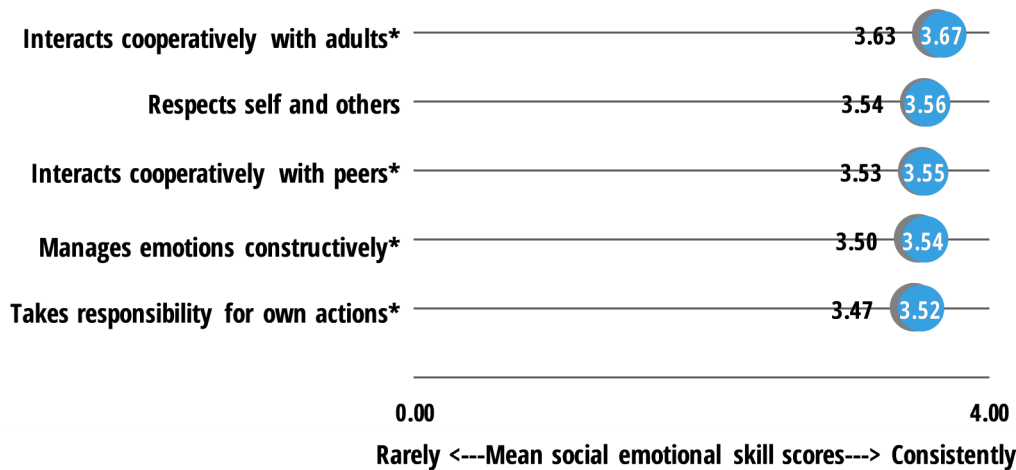


## Increased Elementary Student Outcomes Through Creative Teaching Across the Curriculum

In CLI, teachers are instructed in the use of a set of vetted Creative Teaching strategies to enhance students' learning. Unlike many forms of arts integration, which match a prescribed arts standard with an academic standard within the curriculum, the Creative Teaching strategies draw on techniques from drama, visual arts, music, movement, and digital media as the instructional framework to engage students, drive inquiry, promote rigor, and create personal connections to the material in any content area. Findings showed that teachers' competency in Creative Teaching were significantly positively related to students' overall social and emotional learning (SEL) skills ( $p < .05$ ), controlling for teachers' overall teaching proficiency and students' SES. Teacher competency in Creative Teaching was also significantly positively related to individual SEL items (Figure 5). Teacher's perceptions support these findings. Of 615 teachers surveyed, 89% reflected that changes in their teaching practices due to the adoption of Creative Teaching had a positive impact on students' behavior.

Figure 5.

**Students whose teachers' Creative Teaching implementation competency level was high ( $n = 3,516$ ) had greater emotional skill scores on four out of five emotional skills related to emotional awareness than did students whose teachers' implementation competency level was low ( $n = 2,772$ ).**



Source. 2016–2017 CLI coach records, Emotional Awareness of Self and Others subscale from 2016–2017 AISD Elementary Student Personal Development Skills Report Card

Note. Teachers' implementation competency level was divided into quartiles; this examines the top and bottom quartiles as *high* and *low*. Response options ranged from 1 = *rarely* to 4 = *consistently*. Items marked with an asterisk were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Elementary students whose teachers were more competent in Creative Teaching also had better school engagement than did elementary students whose teachers were less competent in Creative Teaching. Overall, teacher implementation competency in Creative Teaching strategies was found to be significantly positively related to the student engagement scale of the Climate Survey ( $p < .05$ ), controlling for teachers' overall proficiency and students' SES. In other words, students were more likely to be engaged in school when their teachers were more competent in Creative Teaching than when their teachers were less competent in Creative Teaching. At an individual item level, teacher competency in Creative Teaching was significantly related to student's responses to the following statements: "I like to go to school" ( $p < .05$ ) and "I have fun learning in school" ( $p < .05$ ). These findings are aligned with the perceptions of the teachers, 96% of whom believed the professional development opportunities they received through CLI changed their teaching practices in a way that more actively engaged students in their learning.

## Teachers' Competency in Creative Teaching and Elementary Students' Attendance

At foundational CLI schools, teachers' implementation competency in Creative Teaching strategies was significantly related to students' attendance rates ( $p < .05$ ), controlling for teachers' overall teaching proficiency and students' SES. In other words, students were more likely to attend school if their teachers were more competent in Creative Teaching than if their teachers were less competent, when accounting for the students' SES and their teachers' overall teaching proficiency. At the elementary level, students whose teachers were highly competent in Creative Teaching had an average of 1.1 more days in school than did students whose teachers' competency was low in

Creative Teaching. If the attendance rate of all other foundational campus elementary students could be raised to that of the student group whose teachers were highly competent in Creative Teaching, the overall difference in attendance

would equate to approximately \$70,400 in district ADA funding. Improved attendance is also often a precursor to many other positive student outcomes. If we could change attendance with competency in Creative Teaching, this could help students in other ways, too.

## Teachers' Competency in Creative Teaching Strategies and Coaching Influence

CLI coaching influence was a significant factor contributing to teachers' competency in using Creative Teaching strategies, ( $p < .05$ ; Figure 6). Coaching influence is the individual teacher's assessment of his or her CLI coach's skills (0 = *unskilled* through 5 = *very skilled*) multiplied by the time the coach spent with the teacher (Figure 6).

**Figure 6.** CLI teachers were more competent in using Creative Teaching strategies when coaching influence was **high** than when coaching influence was low.



*Source.* 2016–2017 CLI coach records; 2016–2017 Creative Learning Initiative Coaching Survey,  $n = 86$   
*Note.* The coaching influence was divided into quartiles; the top and bottom quartiles were analyzed as *high* and *low*. Teachers' competency level was based on a 6-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 = *does not know Creative Teaching techniques*, to 6 = *has advanced skills at using Creative Teaching techniques*.

## Competency in Creative Teaching

CLI coaches help develop competency in Creative Teaching by working with teachers to develop planning and classroom facilitation skills.

### Planning Creative Teaching competency standards:

**Meets expectations**—teacher consistently identifies and pairs goals and objectives with Creative Teaching strategies, and assesses effectiveness to inform future instruction

**Exceeds expectations**—teacher fluently plans Creative Teaching lessons aligned with objectives that include rigorous reflection questions, include opportunities for assessment, and builds off of previous lessons

### Facilitating Creative Teaching standards:

**Meets expectations**—teacher consistently facilitates Creative Teaching, and assesses and adjusts instruction during the lesson, to engage and differentiate most students in a learning process that promotes student-led inquiry and deeper understanding

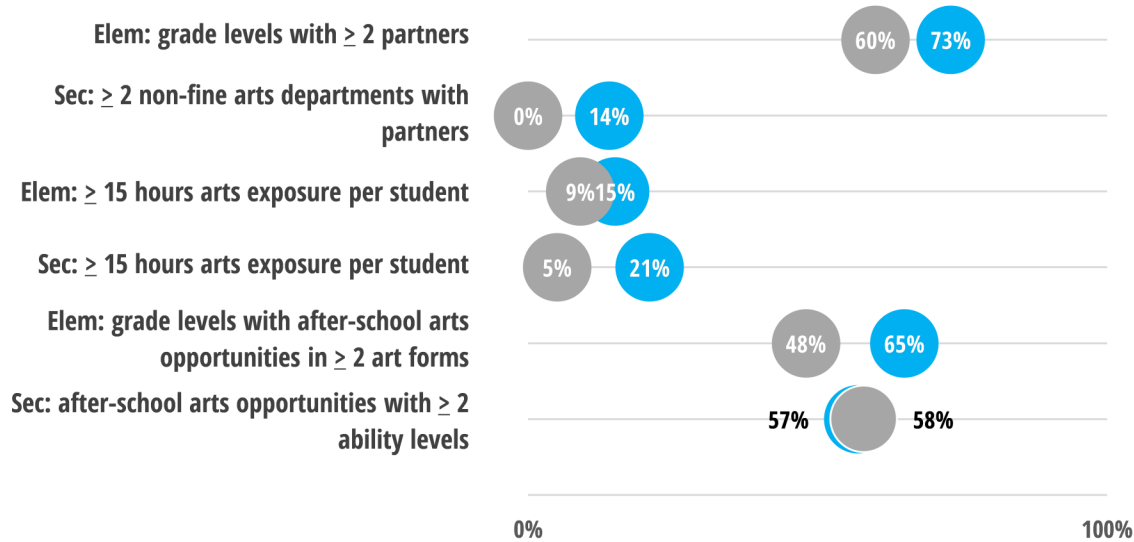
**Exceeds expectations**—teacher facilitates Creative Teaching with fidelity, and fluently assesses and adjusts instruction during the lesson, to engage and differentiate all students equitably in a rigorous learning process that requires students to use all six Creative Teaching elements to promote student-led inquiry, metacognition, and deeper understanding

## Increased Community Arts Programming During and Out of the School Day

To be arts rich in during-school partnerships, CLI recommends that all students have a high dosage of arts-partner exposure during the school year. The percentage of CLI schools meeting the arts-richness standard surpassed the percentage of non-CLI schools meeting the standard on five out of six program recommendations for community arts networks; on one out of five recommendations, the difference was negligible (Figure 7).

Figure 7.

The percentage of CLI schools meeting the arts-richness standard surpassed the percentage of non-CLI schools meeting the standard on five out of six program recommendations for community arts networks; on one out of five recommendations the difference was negligible.



Source. 2016–2017 AISD elementary/secondary Creative Campus Inventory

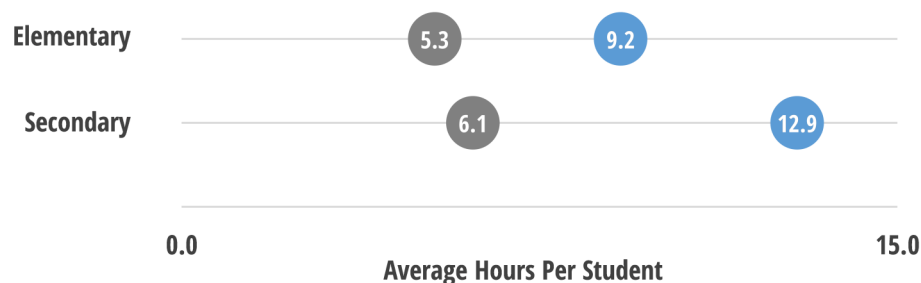
Note. Elem means elementary school, Sec means secondary school.

## Contact Hours With Arts Partners in CLI Schools and in Non-CLI Schools

On average, students experienced twice the number of contact hours with arts partners if they were in a CLI school than if they were not in a CLI school. The 41 CLI elementary schools averaged about 13 hours of arts exposure per student during school, compared with only about 6 hours per student at the 43 non-CLI elementary schools. The 14 CLI secondary schools averaged about 9 hours of arts exposure per student during school, compared with only about 5 hours per student at the 19 non-CLI secondary schools (Figure 8).

Figure 8.

CLI schools exceeded non-CLI schools in the average hours per student of arts-partner exposure.



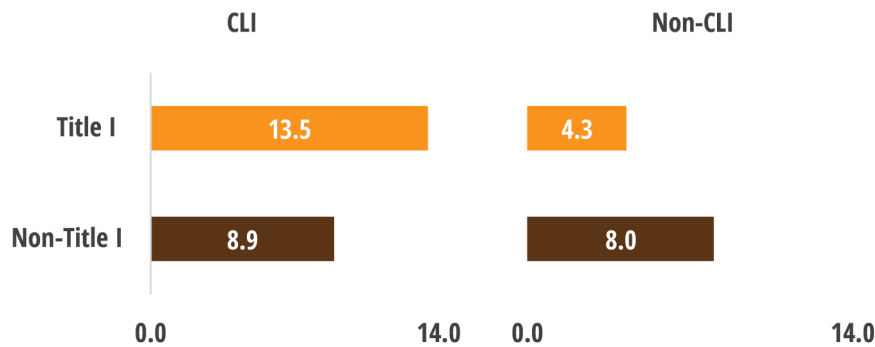
Source. 2016–2017 AISD elementary/secondary Creative Campus Inventory

## Arts Exposure in CLI/Non-CLI and Title I/Non-Title I Schools

Data combined across elementary and secondary schools revealed the average hours of arts-partner exposure per student was greater at CLI Title I schools (13.5 hours) than at non-CLI Title I schools (4.3 hours), CLI non-Title I schools (8.9 hours), and non-CLI non-Title I schools (8.0 hours) (Figure 9).

Figure 9.

The average number of hours of arts experiences per student at **CLI Title I campuses** were almost double those at **CLI non-Title I campuses** and almost triple those at **non-CLI non-Title I campuses**.



Source. 2016–2017 elementary Creative Campus Inventory

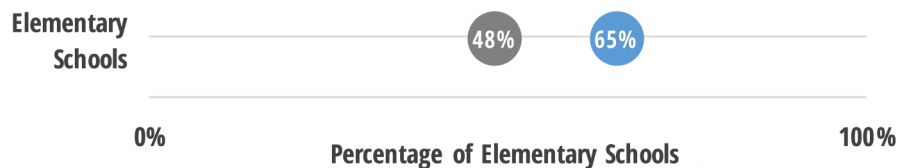
Note. Within 41 CLI elementary campuses, 36 campuses were Title I and five were non-Title I; within 44 non-CLI elementary campuses, 26 campuses were Title I and 18 were non-Title I.

## CLI and Non-CLI Elementary Schools Meeting the Recommendation for After-School Arts Opportunities

Overall, 56% of AISD elementary schools offered after-school opportunities in at least two art forms to five or more grade levels; this included 65% of CLI elementary schools and 48% of non-CLI elementary schools. The 40 CLI elementary schools averaged about five grades with after school-arts opportunities in at least two art forms, compared with less than four grade levels with at least two, on average, at the 42 non-CLI elementary schools (Figure 10).

Figure 10.

A greater percentage of **CLI** than of **non-CLI** elementary schools met the arts-richness standard of having five or more grade levels with after-school arts opportunities in at least two art forms.



Source. 2016–2017 AISD elementary Creative Campus Inventory

Note. Lucy Read Prekindergarten (non-CLI) and Uphaus Early Childhood Center (CLI) were excluded from analysis of component 4 due to having two or fewer grade levels in prekindergarten through grade 5.

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